

*The following comment transcription is from oral testimony taken April 5, 2016 at a public hearing held within Building C of South Seattle Community College's Georgetown campus located at 6737 Corson Avenue South, Seattle, Washington. Reporter: Mary Jo Fratella, CCR #2083*

Name: Sophia Ressler

Organization: Citizen

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"For the record, my name is Sophia Ressler and I'm speaking as a private citizen tonight, but I'm also an employee of Puget SoundKeeper. I grew up on Vashon Island where I, every Saturday morning, would go out on my dad's fishing boat. We also would collect mussels out in front of my childhood home and go clam digging. I think that the most important thing that this rule -- the purpose of it is the human health criteria, which I think Ecology really needs to pay attention to those three little words.

Ecology has an obligation to protect the human health of the people of the Puget Sound, and the Clean Water Act requires that the data that they use be based on the local data about how much fish is being consumed. Unfortunately, this is not what has happened. This data is now 40 years old and we're trying to bring up new standards, but I don't believe that Ecology is doing the proper thing, especially in regards to mercury and PCBs, which are the most glaring issue, as I see it here.

The national toxics rule that was being referred to earlier that PCBs and mercury are still going to be governed by is woefully outdated. It was established in 1992 and has not been updated since then. Currently, there are 17 of the 18 water bodies in the State of Washington with fish advisory consumptions. 17 of these are listed because they are either listed for PCBs, or mercury, or both. So, the point of making this -- improving this rule is that we're trying to make these fish safer -- safer for public --

We're trying to make fish public -- healthier for public consumption, but we're improving -- we're attempting to improve a rule and not even touching on the actual problem. Furthermore, this is an extremely large environmental justice concern. I eat this fish because I want to and I likely do it at levels that are dangerous for me, but at least I make the choice to eat this fish.

There's a lot of people in this state that don't have the choice and whose livelihood is based off of eating this fish. Based on Ecology's own research, these groups are tribal members, Asian Pacific Islanders, and commercial and recreational fishermen, and this rule should be calibrated to protect these sensitive communities.

Completely ignoring PCBs and mercury, and keeping them at inadequate levels, is unacceptable and it doesn't help protect the communities that are living off of this fish; so, I would like to just urge Ecology to not punt PCBs and mercury, which is what they're doing in their current rule, and instead apply the 175 grams a day fish consumption rate to PCBs and mercury like the EPA rule is suggesting that we do."